

McDERMOTT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, the majority leader said it on Wednesday, we will embark upon a very important bill, that is, giving prescription medications for seniors in this country. There is an enormous difference between the Republican and the Democratic plan, and I would like to lay out the differences.

The Democratic prescription medication plan is part of Medicare. It is a core benefit. The Republican plan is not a part of Medicare; it is simply a chance to buy a private insurance policy or join an HMO.

The Democratic plan is secure. Seniors can count on it, just like they count on Medicare. Under the Republican plan, your insurance company or your HMO could leave your area, disrupt your life, as they are doing today with regular benefits, while you look for another company. This is just one more example of the HMO in pharmaceuticals.

Now, the Democratic prescription plan is simple and easy. It is a part of Medicare. Under the Democratic prescription medicine plan, you will not have to change anything that you now do to get your prescriptions. You can continue to get your prescriptions from your local pharmacist, just as you do now.

On the other hand, the Republican plan is complex and difficult. The Republican plan would require you to find an insurance company or an HMO and sign up. Then you would get your prescriptions by mail order. The chairman of the committee came before the Committee on Ways and Means and held up a letter from a mail order house in Florida. All your drugs would come from Florida, and you would have to wait 8 to 10 days.

Under the Democratic plan, you would pay \$25. The one that will be brought to the floor has a guarantee of a \$25 premium. Under the Republican plan, your premium would be set by the insurance company, which would have to be high enough to cover the marketing costs and profits.

There is no guaranteed premium in the Republican plan. Seniors have already been through this with HMOs. They joined an HMO, they were going to get all these benefits. Then they took away the benefits. Then they said we have taken away the benefits, but we are going to charge you a policy premium. That is what will happen under the pharmaceutical plan of the Republicans.

The Republicans say we are going to give you choice. They really take away choice. The only choice that a senior will have is which plan do they go into, which insurance company do they sign up with.

The HMO, or the private insurance company, will limit the choice of what pharmaceuticals they receive. Now, when I am a physician and I write a prescription and I hand it to a patient

and they go to the pharmacy, I know what the patient got. But when it goes through this HMO, they could say, well, that is not on our formula. We will give you something that is close, or we will give you something that we think is just as good, and that choice of the physician and the patient will be interrupted. We will have to put an amendment on the Patient's Bill of Rights on this issue.

The other thing they take away is your choice of pharmacy. If they are a mail order house in Florida, they do not care about your local pharmacy. Your local pharmacist is out of business as far as your being able to do down there and get your medicine with the discount. You will have to pay the old high prices. In my view, the Republican plan really guarantees a benefit to insurance companies or HMOs, not to seniors.

There is no guarantee that the insurance companies will offer an affordable, and I emphasize, affordable prescription drug plan to seniors.

Now, you ask me, why is that? Well, let me tell you the specifics of the bill. Ordinarily a lot of people do not read the bill, but I do. The Republican plan guarantees profits to insurance companies and HMOs by letting them hold the Government hostage.

Page 56 of the Republican plan says that the Government will pay private plans not more than 35 percent of the cost of those medicines. So you have paid your premium through Social Security, and the 35 percent for the Government that has to cover it. But the Congressional Budget Office and the insurance companies say the plan will not work; we will not offer a plan if the Government pays only 35 percent.

So the Republicans answer that. They go around on page 40 and they say the Government may provide financial incentives, including partial underwriting of the risk to get the insurance companies to sell policies to seniors. During the markup in the committee, the chairman of the health subcommittee said that they could cover up to 99 percent. Now, if you are an insurance company out there and they offer you 35 percent, you say, I do not want that. I am going to wait until they offer me 100 percent.

It is a bad bill, and we have to pass the Democratic alternative.

□ 1430

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. TOOMEY). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WOLF) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. WOLF addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

#### PRIVATIZATION OF ENRICHMENT INDUSTRY SHOULD BE REVERSED

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, I would like to share with my colleagues a sad and tragic headline from the Columbus Dispatch of yesterday. It is a headline that reads, "Piketon Plant to Close," and the subheading says, "2000 workers will lose jobs because of the shutdown." Then they say, "Less than 2 years ago, the United States Enrichment Corporation vowed to keep the Piketon plant and a sister facility in Paducah, Kentucky open until the year 2005." This is the plant that employs 2000 southern Ohio men and women.

This industry was privatized less than 2 years ago, and at the time of the privatization, they accepted an obligation, an obligation to operate both the Paducah and the Piketon sites through the year 2004. The day before yesterday, flying in the face of a recommendation from the Department of Treasury and from a strongly worded request from Secretary Richardson, the CEO of this company and the board of directors voted to close this facility. Mr. Nick Timbers, a person that I appropriately refer to as "Slick Nick" Timbers, was quoted in The Washington Post as saying, "It had to be done. It is the reason Congress privatized the company." For Mr. Timbers to utter such a statement is sheer hypocrisy. It shows that this man cannot be trusted or believed. He, as the CEO of this company, accepted an obligation, an obligation entered into through a legal agreement with the Department of Treasury, and he has broken that agreement.

In response to my criticism and the criticism of Senator VOINOVICH and Senator DEWINE from Ohio and others, Mr. Timbers was quoted in an AP story yesterday as saying, "Politicians should stop all this old, tiring finger pointing."

This is a man who negotiated through his own maneuverings a \$3.6 million golden parachute. If he is relieved of his job, he walks away with \$3.6 million and yet, he is willing to lay off thousands of hard-working Americans without giving them due consideration.

Mr. Speaker, privatization of our enrichment industry was an unwise decision. That is why next week I plan to introduce legislation to have the Government renationalize this vital industry. It provides 23 percent of the electricity output in this Nation, and this privatized company is destroying not only the enrichment industry, but the mining industry and the conversion industry as well.

Mr. Speaker, if we are not careful, if we as a Congress do not take appropriate and immediate action, it is possible that 3 or 4 or 5 years from now, this country could find itself totally dependent on foreign sources for 23 percent of our Nation's electricity. We know what dependency on foreign sources for oil does to prices. We know what gasoline is selling for today. Can we imagine how we could be brought to our knees if we were totally dependent